DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 713 CS 216 474

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TITLE Year-Round Education: Parent Satisfaction after the First Year.

PUB DATE Feb 97

NOTE 71p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Year-Round Education (24th, San Diego, CA, February 9-13, 1997).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Family School Relationship; *Parent Attitudes; Parent School Relationship; School Attitudes; *School Schedules; *Vacation Programs; *Year Round Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that explored parent satisfaction with Year-Round Education (YRE) and its impact on family lives. Data were gathered through 20 interviews with parents of children who attended 2 elementary schools during the first year of a year-round pilot program in a large suburb adjacent to a midwestern city. Approximately 33% of the schools' families qualified for free or reduced lunches, were of Middle Eastern heritage (88%), and were limited in their English-speaking proficiency. All parents, even those opposed to YRE, expressed positive attitudes toward their school. Thirteen parents in the sample were Lebanese Muslim immigrants, who requested that the school schedule interfered with their children's summer religious school and with summer trips to Lebanon. Despite problems with vacation plans and child care, parents in general reported that YRE had a positive effect on their children's academic and social development. They felt that the new schedule was worth the disruption. (Contains 36 references and 6 tables). (LMC)

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Year-Round Education: Parent Satisfaction After the First Year

National Association For Year-Round Education
Annual Conference
February 1997

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Year-Round Education:
Parent Satisfaction After the First Year

Introduction

Rationale

Sometime around Labor Day, most of the 51.7 million children attending grades one through twelve in the United States begin a new school year. The traditional school calendar was designed during the nineteenth century to enable students to work on family farms during the summer months. While the United States no longer has a primarily agrarian economy, schools have continued to operate on a nine month calendar giving students up to twelve weeks of summer vacation.

In *Prisoners of Time*, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) addressed the need to change the schedule of American schools:

> Unyielding and relentless, the time available in a uniform six-hour day and a 180-day year is the unacknowledged design flaw in American education. By relying on time as the metric for school organization and the curriculum, we have built a learning enterprise on a foundation of sand (p.8).

The Commission stressed that in order to meet the demands of a new world economy, "the United States needs both--the best use of available time and more time" (p.29). It recommended that at least some schools in every school district remain open throughout the year (p.34).

Students in other countries attend school more continuously and for longer periods of time than students in the United States (Lord & Horn, 1987). At the same time the United States is faced with intense worldwide economic competition, parents have less time to devote to the education of their children. More American students live in single parent families, and in most two-parent households, both adults work outside the home. Restructuring the time that students spend in school could mean more efficient use of valuable instructional time.

Statement of the Problem

Tradition dictates the structure of the year in most schools throughout the country. However, the nine month calendar grew out of a need for farm labor during the summer months, a need which no longer exists. The traditional nine month school year worked in the past to provide children with the minimum education necessary to participate as citizens in a society characterized by industry and agriculture.

American society is far more complex than it once was. With information and technology expanding at a geometric pace, we can no longer afford to continue with outdated educational practices. We must be open to substantial changes in the way we school children in order to compete in a world economy. By restructuring the school year and increasing the number of days of instruction, year-round education may improve instruction and educational outcomes.

At a time when society is calling for substantial changes in the way we deliver education, year-round education should be

considered a viable option. Despite major changes that have taken place in society, many people still believe that a school calendar that worked for them is best for their children. After forty years of opposition, fifty-two percent of Americans now favor extending the school year (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994). However, parents may not be willing to accept this change.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of year-round schooling on families. Any educational change as significant as a reorganization of the school calendar is certain to impact the lives of students and their families. Using an interview format and open ended questions rather than surveys allowed parents to share stories instead of simply expressing approval for or dissatisfaction with their children's schools.

The sparse literature that exists regarding parent satisfaction with year-round schools is lacking in scope and breadth. The research consists of short surveys, most frequently conducted by the year-round schools themselves, used to justify the continuation of year-round programs. Data is often muddied by questions that fail to separate parent satisfaction with individual schools from opinions regarding year-round scheduling. The interview format of this study was structured to allow parents' feelings about their children's schools to be partitioned from opinions regarding the year-round calendar.

The interviews focused on three areas: general perceptions of year-round education, intersession instruction weeks and

breaks, and the impact of the year-round calendar on family life. Parents who had just concluded their first year of experience with children in year-round schools were asked to share stories of how year-round education had impacted their families.

Research Questions

Family life is certain to be altered because of year-round education. In addition to a shortened summer vacation, intersession periods provide two or three week breaks in instruction when children are not attending school, altering the traditional rhythm of family life. However, proponents claim that parents who have had experience with children on year-round schedules are more supportive of the concept than parents who have never had children on alternative schedules (Hawkins, 1992).

Three related research questions flow from these areas of focus:

1. What is the overall satisfaction of parents with year-round education?

2. What impact has the year-round calendar had on family life?

3. What impact have intersession periods had on families?

Limitations

The data for this research were gathered through twenty interviews with parents of children who attended two elementary schools during the initial year of a year-round pilot program. Thus, the study is presented with precautions and carefully limited generalization is warranted.

1. Interviews were conducted during the summer following the

first year of the year-round schools program. The year-round program was new for the schools as well as for the parents. Parents new to the calendar, but sending children to already established year-round schools would have had different experiences. Also, findings may have been different had parents been interviewed numerous times throughout the year, at some point during the school year, or after several years of experience with the alternative calendar.

2. Interviews were conducted at parents' homes or at either of the two schools, depending on the preference of the subjects. Even though school was not in session and regular school staff were not present, it is possible that parents felt constrained in their responses when interviewed in the school buildings.

3. Although subjects were selected at random for the study, a small number of parents were never included in the sample because they self-selected to send their children to traditional calendar schools prior to implementation of the year-round calendar through a district school choice program. These parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the year-round calendar by their choice to send their children to traditional calendar schools. Had these parents been forced to send their children to year-round schools, it is likely that they would have been dissatisfied with the schedule.

4. The two schools had large numbers of children who were bilingual and whose parents were at least somewhat unfamiliar with schools in the United States. This may have influenced their evaluations.

5. Children at both schools came from primarily low income

homes as measured by participation in the school lunch program. The impact year-round education had on their lives may not generalize to other populations.

Review of the Literature

Models of Year-Round Schooling

Year-round education involves a reorganization of the traditional 180 day calendar so that schooling is distributed throughout the year for more continuous instruction and short, frequent breaks. Approximately 1.8 million students attended year-round schools during the 1995-96 school year. The number of schools adopting a nontraditional calendar continues to grow. In 1986, 408 schools identified themselves as year-round schools. By 1996, that number had grown to 2,433 (National Association for Year-Round Education, 1996). In 1996, California had 1,304 year-round schools, the highest number for any state. Texas had 363 year-round schools and Florida had 168.

One of two basic plans is generally utilized to reorganize the school year: a multiple track plan or a single track plan. In many schools, a year-round calendar helps to alleviate overcrowding through the use of a multiple track program. The student population is divided into several groups or tracks with instruction and vacation periods staggered so that one track is on vacation at all times and the school building is in operation virtually all year. This plan is useful in districts wishing to stretch their facilities to accommodate up to 50 percent more students. Multiple track programs are common in rapidly growing areas of California and Texas. In an effort to cope with a burgeoning student population and a lack of facilities, 25% of California's students attend year-round programs (Gandara and Fish, 1994).

Single track programs are created for pedagogical reasons rather than more efficient use of facilities. Utilizing a single track plan, all students and teachers in a school are in session or have vacations at the same times. The most common single track calendar is referred to as a 45 - 15 plan. The year is divided into four nine-week sessions. Following each session is a two or three week instructional break called an intersession. This plan provides more continuous instruction with shorter, frequent vacations. The long summer break, although not completely eliminated in most year-round schedules, is typically reduced to six weeks. Two other traditional vacation periods, Christmas and Easter, are also maintained. During the intersessions, students are frequently offered the opportunity to attend optional programs providing additional days of instruction for remediation or enrichment.

History of Year-Round Education

Glines (1995) reports that although vacation summer schools began to emerge during the 1870s, the first true year-round program began in 1904 in Bluffton, Indiana. Bluffton was faced with a fast growing community resulting in a shortage of classrooms. The year was divided into four twelve-week periods with students attending classes for three of the four quarters. Schools were occupied eleven months and closed in August. This schedule lasted from 1904 through 1908 ending shortly after William Wirt, Bluffton's superintendent, left the district.

Another early year-round school program was implemented in Newark, New Jersey in 1912. The Newark plan differed from

Bluffton in that it was based on acceleration, particularly of new immigrants. The regular curriculum was divided into thirds based on the assumption that an average student who attended an additional fourth quarter of the 48 week school year could complete the work of one and one-third years in one calendar year. The Newark Board of Education terminated the program in 1931, citing costs, age differentials of students entering high schools, and community dissatisfaction.

Forty or more school districts operated year-round programs at some time prior to World War II. Early year-round programs existed in Gary, Indiana from 1907 through 1938, Amarillo, Texas in 1910, Minot, North Dakota from 1910 through 1917, Omaha, Nebraska from 1922 through 1934, Nashville, Tennessee from 1924 through 1932, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania from 1928 through 1935 and Ambridge, Pennsylvania in 1932. These plans were instituted to utilize school facilities in more efficient ways, to cope with overcrowding problems, to allow for remediation of slower students, or to accommodate students who wanted to accelerate. During World War II, teachers and students were needed to work in agriculture and industry during the summer, which led to the demise of year-round programs.

The idea of year-round schools occasionally resurfaced during the 1950s and 1960s in magazine articles (Friggens, 1959; Fleming, 1963) as a way to improve the quality of education and in studies by various school districts as a way to handle overcrowding problems. However, these proposals were not implemented due to lack of community support. It was not until the 1970s that year-round programs again began to take hold (Glines, 1995). The

Valley View School District in suburban Chicago implemented a year-round schedule in 1970 to cope with economic problems caused by student population growth. In 1958, the district enrolled 219 students while by 1970, the student enrollment had grown to 6,650. During the 1970s, overcrowding in districts like San Diego and Los Angeles led to an expansion in the number of year-round programs. California had (and continues to have) the greatest number of year-round schools. Schools in other rapidly growing western and southern states have also adopted year-round plans.

As school age populations declined, some schools returned to a traditional calendar while others moved from multiple track to single track plans. The 1990s have seen a great deal of growth in year-round programs. While prior growth was attributed to population increases and economic necessity, recently more schools have changed to single track year-round schedules in an effort to improve instruction (Ballinger, 1996). Of the 2,433 school with year-round calendars, 1,305 or 54% are single track schools while 1,128 or 46% operate on a multiple track schedule (National Association for Year-round Education, 1996).

Summer Learning Loss Theory

Reshaping the school calendar to eliminate most of the three month summer vacation is meant to reduce summer learning loss. Summer setback, the theory that less affluent students lose educational ground over summer vacation, has long been speculated to contribute to achievement differences between poor and middle class children. Studies of summer learning have focused on inequality of outcomes and compared educational growth rates for

children from lower and higher socioeconomic status (SES) families and of different races. Hayes and Grether (1969) compared reading scores of New York City children. They reported that over 80% of the difference in achievement between white and black students could be explained by differential summer learning loss.

Compensatory education programs have been evaluated to determine if summer loss reduced gains made during the school year. In a national study of summer learning, the Sustaining Effects Study (Carter, 1984), no absolute achievement loss was found during the summer. However, a summer slow down was observed. The rate of learning was substantially lower during the summer than it was during the school year in both reading and math. Klibanoff and Haggart (1981) compared compensatory education students with those not enrolled in the program. They found small gaps in reading and math achievement supporting the theory of summer learning loss among the minority population relative to the majority population when defined by race or SES. The gap in reading scores fell during the year from 24 to 22 points only to increase from 22 to 26 points over the summer.

In her longitudinal study of fifth, sixth, and seventh grades in 42 Atlanta schools, Heyns (1978) found support for the existence of differential summer learning. All children learned at a slower pace during the summer as compared with the school year; however the effects of family background and race were far greater during the summer than when school was in session. When examining summer learning in terms of equality of outcomes, Heyns (1987) found:

School promotes learning relative to fixed periods of

> time without schooling; schools also equalize outcomes--not absolutely, but relative to the inequality produced when schools are closed. (p. 1156).

Utilizing data from the Beginning School Study (BSS) of children in Baltimore City schools, Entwisle and Alexander (1992) tracked season-by-season mathematics achievement for one cohort of African American and white children from first through third grades. When these youngsters began school, standardized test scores favored whites by six points. The mathematics concepts/reasoning subtest of the California Achievement Test (CAT) was administered five times during the fall and spring of grades one through three. By second grade, the difference between the scores of the whites and African Americans had widened to ten points. By the beginning of third grade the difference in scores was fourteen points. Further, gains during the school year varied by SES with higher SES children gaining fewer points than poorer classmates during the time school was in session. Lower SES students consistently lost points during both summers while higher SES students gained points. Lower SES children experienced gains that were equal to or surpassed those of higher SES students during the time school was in session. However, higher SES children had greater gains during the summers. The authors concluded:

> The seasonal patterning of scores emphasizes the point that home disadvantages are compensated for in winter because, when school is in session, poor children and better-off children perform at almost the same level. Schools seem to be doing a better job than they have

> been given credit for. It is mainly when school is not in session that consistent losses occur for poorer children. (p. 82).

Advantages of Year-Round Education

The foremost benefit of year-round schedules for all children is that learning is continuous. The shortened summer vacation, more frequent breaks, and additional days of instruction provided by the optional intersessions are believed to lead to improved achievement, increased retention, reduced need for review, more immediate remediation, increased opportunities for enrichment, and expanded parent involvement.

Although early analyses were inconclusive as to whether year-round schools showed higher achievement than did traditional calendar schools, no study has been found that reveals a significant advantage for traditional calendar programs over year-round schooling (Winters, 1995). No school has reported a drop in achievement because of the implementation of a year-round calendar (Ballinger, Kirschenbaum, Pormbeauf, 1987).

In her review of early achievement studies, Merino (1983) reported that among nine studies of year-round schools utilizing a pre/post test design, three showed gains favoring a year-round calendar. The other six studies reviewed showed no significant differences in achievement for students on either a traditional or year-round calendar.

In a 1991 comparison of achievement in the San Diego Unified School District, Alcorn (1992) made 27 different comparisons of test score objectives. Year-round schools exceeded traditional

calendar schools in 17 comparisons, traditional calendar schools exceeded year-round schools in one comparison, and no significant difference was found in nine comparisons. The one case where traditional calendar schools scored significantly higher than year-round schools was the degree of achievement of California Assessment Program (CAP) and California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) objectives in language in grade five at the one year interval.

In a more recent review, Winters (1995) examined nineteen studies. He further divided these achievement studies to obtain 41 possible categories of test results and grade levels reported. Results favorable to year-round programs were reported in 36 of the 41 categories. Mixed results were obtained in the remaining five categories.

Retention appears to be supported by a year-round calendar schedule. Parents and teachers report that students return from their shorter vacation breaks ready to learn and remembering more of what they learned before the break, reducing the need for review and enabling teachers to move directly on to new material (Paton & Paton, 1976). Even more than regular education students, children with special needs benefit from the year-round calendar. The courts have mandated year-round programs for children receiving special education services who have a regression-recoupment disability because the lengthy interruption in schooling during the summer poses a serious obstacle to learning (Larson, Goodman, Gleen, 1981).

Instruction of students who are learning English as a second language is thought to be especially suited to year-round

schooling (Willis, 1995). When English is not the students' primary language, a long summer vacation poses a special problem. Away from school, students speak their home and community language. Because new language proficiency requires formal instruction on a continuous basis, three months away from school curtails new language acquisition (Ballinger, Kirschenbaum, Pormbeauf, 1987). Rather than spending the summer speaking only their native language, year-round school students continue to use English in the classroom with only short breaks spread out throughout the year.

The addition of intersession programs allows schools to offer students a myriad of enrichment and remediation opportunities that would not otherwise be available due to lack of time. Interdisciplinary theme instruction is commonly offered by schools during intersessions. Math, science, language arts, and social studies are combined with the arts in program themes such as the Middle Ages, the Rain Forest, or multiculturalism. During intersessions, other schools allow students to select among mini-courses offered to multi-age groups. Remediation programs offered during intersessions are available to students who are not meeting grade level expectations. These programs enable students to receive help soon after the need is established rather than waiting until the school year is over, when they have fallen further behind and are in danger of being retained in their grade.

Parent involvement in school activities can also be enhanced with the expansion of the school year. A year-round schedule enables working parents who must take vacations from work in the

summer to participate in school activities when they would be unavailable at other times of the year.

The most often cited disadvantage to year-round education is the disruption of routine. Parents frequently must alter vacation schedules and child care arrangements. There may be conflicts for families having a parent who is an academic with a three-month summer vacation. Families with siblings on different schedules can be inconvenienced when children are at home at different times throughout the year.

Parent Support for Year-Round Education

Parent and community support has been identified as essential to a successful change from a traditional calendar schedule (Merino, 1983). Parent and teacher attitudes were found to be the most important predictors of whether or not implementation of a proposed year-round program took place. Parents and community members have exerted pressure that has led school boards to reject year-round school proposals and to close already established programs (Glines, 1995; Philo Middle School, 1996).

The National Association for Year-Round Education (Glines & Bingle, 1992) reports that even in situations where the choice to attend a year-round program is voluntary, implementation has been fought. The Association claims that when year-round education is first proposed generally 30 percent of parents are supportive, 30 percent are strongly opposed, and 40 percent are undecided. Nationally, concerns have been expressed regarding child care, the disruption of traditional summer activities such as summer camp, Bible school, and sports programs, difficulties for families with

children on different school calendars, problems for families of teachers who teach in traditional schools, and interference with long family summer trips (Merino, 1983).

Proponents claim that once parents understand the concept of year-round education, their initially negative views change (Ballinger, Kirschenbaum, Pormbeauf, 1987; Inger, 1994; Serbow, 1992). Compared with parents of children attending schools following the traditional calendar, Elsberry (1992) found that parents of year-round students perceived the quality of instruction their children received to be better. These parents indicated that a year-round calendar was more effective in the overall education of their children. Parents of children following a year-round schedule reported that planning family activities was facilitated rather than harmed by the change in the school calendar (Elsberry, 1992; Serbow, 1992). When population declines have allowed multiple track calendar schools to choose between changing to single track or returning to a traditional calendar, parents frequently preferred to remain on the year-round calendar (White, 1988).

Previous studies have shown that a majority of parents who have children attending alternative calendar programs are satisfied with year-round schooling. Gandara and Fish (1994) report that among three schools studied, parent satisfaction ranged from 70 to 96 percent. Other studies also report high levels of satisfaction (Keesee & Braschler, 1996; Lincoln Elementary School, 1996; Philo Middle School, 1996; Willis, 1995). However, satisfaction has not been universal. In one survey disaggregated by ethnicity (Gandara & Fish, 1994), only 39 percent

of Hmong parents surveyed expressed approval for the year-round program and none expressed a preference for the program over the traditional school calendar. Further disaggregating data may reveal other differences.

Several deficiencies can be seen in previous assessments of parent satisfaction. Most parent surveys have been conducted by the schools themselves (Gandara and Fish, 1994; Winters, 1995), resulting in possible bias in favor of year-round education. Data have been gathered through short surveys with responses limited to yes and no or occasionally Likert scales. These surveys have failed to reveal the impact the change in scheduling has had on families. Parent satisfaction with year-round schooling has not been measured separately from satisfaction with school in general. For example, parents may rate their year-round school highly, but still prefer that the school their children attend return to a traditional calendar.

Methodology

Statement of the Problem

This study examined parent satisfaction with year-round education in three areas: parent satisfaction with the alternative calendar, the impact of the year-round calendar on family life, and parent satisfaction with intersessions. A seven-stage qualitative approach (Kvale, 1996) which included thematizing about the topic of parent satisfaction with year-round schools, designing the study, selecting the sample, creating the interview guide, interviewing parents, transcribing interviews, interpreting data, verifying findings, and reporting the results was utilized for this investigation.

The two year-round schools were self-selected for the change in schedule on the basis of administrator, teacher, and parent interest as well as availability of air conditioning. Although interviews were conducted with randomly selected parents, each family chose to participate in year-round education. Families who chose to remain on the traditional calendar were given the option of attending another school within the district. The close proximity of alternate schools made this option viable for parents who strongly objected to year-round education.

To examine parent satisfaction with year-round schooling, three questions were investigated.

1. What is the overall satisfaction of parents with year-round education?

2. What impact has the year-round calendar had on family life?

3. What impact have intersession periods had on families?

Measuring Parent Satisfaction

When used in addition to norm-referenced standardized measures, parent satisfaction data provide an alternative indicator of program success. McNaughton (1994) identified four justifications for collecting parent satisfaction information:

1. Parents have the major responsibility and control of a child's development, and their decisions concerning success and failure should have primacy.
2. Information about parent satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) can be used to develop better services and prevent program rejection.
3. Parent participation in programs may be increased by including parents in evaluative decision making.
4. Consumer satisfaction data may be used to convince other audiences (e.g., funding agencies, administrators) of the usefulness of a program. (p.27-8).

Concerns have been raised regarding the measurement of parent satisfaction (McNaughton, 1994). Regardless of satisfaction with services received, Campbell (1976) stated, "the most dependable means of assuring a favorable outcome is to use voluntary testimonials from those who have had the treatment" (p. 95). Consequently parent satisfaction surveys, conducted by year-round schools themselves and with less than perfect response rates, have provided little useful information to those seeking to improve program quality.

Two methods are generally used to collect data regarding parent satisfaction: surveys and personal interviews. Research on preferred response style has yielded mixed results and no one

method has been identified as optimal (McNaughton, 1994). However, the richness of potential responses strongly favors personal interviews. As one parent stated, "I am so tired of checking or circling the number corresponding to statements that are not mine" (Bailey & Blasco, 1990, p. 201).

Population

Interviewed parents had children who attended one of two schools located in a large suburb adjacent to a Midwestern city. The district enrollment for the 1995-96 school year was 15,363. Approximately thirty-three percent of those students (5,109) qualified for free or reduced lunch. Forty-four percent of the district's students were of Middle Eastern heritage, one percent were African American, one percent were Hispanic, and fifty-four percent were non-Arab whites.

A total of 945 students were enrolled in the two schools during the 1995-96 school year. The population of both schools was comprised of preschool through fifth grade students. Both schools were neighborhood schools drawing their populations from the immediately surrounding residential areas. Most students lived in older one and two story single or two family homes. School A was larger with a student population of 540 kindergarten through fifth grade students and 32 preschool students. School A also housed two self-contained special education classrooms with 19 students, including some who resided outside of School A's attendance area. School B was smaller with 327 kindergarten through fifth grade students and 31 preschool students. School B offered students the opportunity to be placed in bilingual

classrooms where fifty percent of instruction was delivered in Arabic, the home language of many students. Half of the classrooms in School B offered bilingual instruction.

Each school had a heavy concentration of poor students as measured by the number of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Sixty-one percent of School A's students and seventy-nine percent of School B's students received free or reduced lunch.

Approximately sixty-seven percent of School A's population was Middle Eastern. Other groups represented included Hispanics, Rumanians and Hungarians. School B had approximately ninety-two percent Middle Eastern students with no other ethnic groups represented in large numbers. Fifty-five percent of School A's students had limited English proficiency (LEP) while eighty-two percent of School B's students were LEP. Most of these students spoke Arabic as their first language.

The Schools

In 1993, with the leadership of the superintendent, a citizens' committee recommended exploring the possibility of implementing a year-round program in one or two elementary schools in the district. At that time, construction was beginning on two new air conditioned elementary schools. The district obtained a grant to study the benefits of year-round education. On August 1, 1995, a year-round pilot program began in these two new elementary schools.

The schools implemented a single track plan where all students and teachers attended classes and had vacations on the same schedule. The year was divided into four sessions with a

summer break of six weeks. Students attended school for approximately 45 days followed by a two or three week intersession. During the three intersessions, students could attend optional, week-long programs providing a total of fifteen additional days of instruction. A theme-related experience providing students with enrichment, reinforcement, and more experiences to be successful learners in a different style learning environment was offered during the first week of each intersession. Student participation in intersessions during the three programs offered during the first year ranged from 82 to 98 percent.

Several parent meetings were held prior to the establishment of the year-round program so that parents could learn about the program and offer their input. Although some negative feelings were expressed, parents were generally supportive of the concept. Far fewer than the predicted 30 percept of parents expressed strong objections to the year-round program. Parents and students who did not wish to participate were offered the option of choosing to attend another district school. Very few students (fewer than 20 of approximately 800 students) elected to leave their home schools because of the change in schedule.

The Families

The families who participated in this study were randomly selected using a random number table and classroom student lists. Table A provides a description of the interviewed families. Of the twenty families, seven at School A and four at School B were eligible to participate in the federal lunch program. Two

Table 1

Parent #	School	Ethnic	LEP	Free lunch	Number of children	Number of schools	Mother works
1	A	white	no	yes	2	1	yes
2	A	white	no	no	2	1	yes
3	A	Arab	no	yes	1	1	yes
4	B	Arab	no	no	4	2	no
5	B	Arab	yes	yes	2	1	no
6	A	Arab	no	yes	4	1	no
7	B	Arab	yes	no	3	1	no
8	A	wh/Arab	no	yes	3	1	yes
9	A	Arab	yes	yes	4	1	no
10	A	Arab	no	no	5	2	no
11	A	Hispanic	yes	yes	2	1	yes
12	B	white	yes	no	2	2	no
13	B	Arab	no	no	5	4	yes
14	B	Arab	no	no	1	1	yes
15	A	Arab	no	no	4	3	yes
16	A	Arab	yes	yes	6	2	no
17	B	white	no	no	6	3	no
18	B	Arab	yes	yes	4	2	no
19	B	Arab	yes	yes	3	1	no
20	B	Arab	yes	yes	4	1	no

families (parent #2 and parent #11) from School A had no father in the home. The remaining eight families attending School A and all ten families who sent students to School B had both a mother and a father in the home. Six of the mothers from School A and two of the mothers from School B worked outside their homes.

Of the families interviewed, six from School A and eight from School B were Middle Eastern. One family from School A had a Middle Eastern stepfather and a white, non-Arab mother. One family from School A was Hispanic. One family (parent # 17) from School B came to the United States from Europe three years prior to the interview. Two students from School A and two students from School B were from non-Arab white families.

The number of children in the families interviewed ranged from one child to six children. Seven families from School A had children attending only one school, and three families had children attending two or more schools. Five families from School B had children attending only one school, and five families had children attending more than one school. All families with children attending more than one school had children on different schedules because these two elementary schools were the only schools in the district that followed year-round schedules.

Data Collection

A qualitative study utilizing focused open-ended interviews (Wolcott, 1994) was conducted to allow parents to share their stories. Ten students from each of two year-round schools within one district were selected at random from class lists. Their parents were interviewed during the summer following the first

year that these schools followed an alternative calendar. Approximately one half of the interviews took place at the schools and one half took place in the homes of the respondents. School was not in session at the time of the interviews and school staff were not present. A bilingual aid, not associated with either school, was present when necessary to translate questions and answers. Factual information provided in the interviews was cross-checked using student cumulative files.

Before the interviews, subjects were told that the superintendent, school board, and administration were interested in their opinions and experiences following their first year of year-round school. Parents were assured that their names would not be associated with the study and that their responses would be confidential. All respondents signed consent forms. Introductory remarks explaining the purpose of the study and the methods to be used as well as a discussion about family composition (ie father, mother, ages of children) provided an opportunity to establish rapport between the subjects and the interviewer.

Table 2

Consent Form

I understand that Gail Shenkman, a doctoral student at The University of Michigan and an employee of the Dearborn Public Schools, is conducting a study of parent satisfaction with extended year school. I have been asked to participate as an informant. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I further understand that no questions or procedures are involved which represent a threat to either my physical or mental well being. My name will not be used in any subsequent report and my identity will be disguised by the study's author.

Under the above conditions I agree to participate.

Signed _____

The interviews were conducted as "conversation(s) between two partners about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1995). Knowledge evolved through the dialogue. When parents were initially contacted to schedule a meeting, they were given a briefing about the purpose and content of the interview. When necessary, a bilingual aid also made phone contact prior to the interview to explain the purpose of the scheduled interview. This explanation was repeated at the start of the actual interview.

Before the conclusion of each interview, parents were debriefed and asked if they had anything more to add to the discussion and asked about their experience with the interview.

Interview times ranged from 15 to 25 minutes excluding introductory and closing remarks. Interviews were tape recorded for later transcription, but notes were also taken to supplement the recordings. When a translator was needed, she was instructed to translate questions and answers verbatim without additional explanation or interpretation.

An interview guide was utilized for introductory questions, to provide some commonality among the interviews, and to assure that the research questions were completely addressed. However, parents were encouraged through probing follow up questions to expand fully on their responses and provide any additional incites that they could regarding the general topic of year-round education. Significant or unclear portions of parents' responses were repeated or restated by the interviewer to help clarify and interpret meaning. All subjects provided depth in their responses. Every effort was made to remain neutral regarding preference for or against year-round schools with the interviewer assuming the position of an interested researcher. When necessary in questioning, a skeptical stance was utilized in order not to illicit falsely positive opinions.

Table 3

Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your family.

   Members, number and sex of children, children in other schools, working parents

2. Tell me about your School A/B.

   Number of years at the school, general feelings about the school, does the family attend school events

3. When did you first learn that School A/B would become a year-round school? What was your reaction? What is your opinion of the calendar now?

4. How has the change in the calendar affected your child(ren)?

   Positive and negative experiences, attitude toward school, behavior, achievement

5. How has the change in the calendar affected your family?

   Child care, family activities, camps

6. Tell me about the intersessions.

   Which of the intersessions did you child(ren) attend? What did you like/dislike about the intersessions? Is there anything that should be changed? Will your child participate in future intersessions?

7. If a new neighbor asked you about year-round school, what would you tell her?

Data Analysis

Kvale (1996) stated that the purpose of the qualitative research interview has been depicted as the description and interpretation of themes in the subjects' lived experiences. To this end, four steps of analysis were utilized. The first step was to have subjects describe their lived experiences during the interviews. The second step evolved when the subjects themselves found new relationships and new meanings for their experiences during the interviews. In the third step, the interviewer restated the meaning of what the interviewee described checking both individuals' understanding through probing questions. In the fourth step, the interviewer interpreted the transcribed interviews.

Introductory remarks regarding the purpose and procedure of the interviews as well as closing remarks were omitted from the transcriptions. The balance of each interview was transcribed verbatim by the interviewer and verified by another individual for reliability.

Once all interviews were completed and transcribed, data were examined. Interviews were reread, noting patterns and themes that the interview statements had in common. The transcripts were rechecked and analyzed for meaning. The transcript statements were then coded under theme headings using a cut-and-paste method to simplify analysis.

Twenty-three (table 4) different theme statements were constructed. These initial theme statements and the associated transcript portions were analyzed for commonalities. When potentially similar theme statements were identified, the

Table 4

Initial Theme Statements

1. Intersessions were great - different kind of learning
2. More days = more learning
3. Decreases summer learning loss
4. Children bored in summer and get in trouble
5. Increased achievement
6. Better behavior and attitude about school
7. Returned from intersessions ready to learn
8. Went to Lebanon this summer - no schedule problem
9. Positive interaction with other children during the summer
10. Would like to see year-round education in the middle school
11. Parent could spend time with older children
12. Convenient because mom works
13. Was able to travel during intersession break without student missing school
14. Vacation overseas - anticipates problem
15. Conflicting schedules - kids in more than one school
16. Child care problem during intersessions
17. Intersessions are just play
18. Lack of knowledge about intersessions
19. Lack of knowledge about year-round education
20. Questions benefit to children
21. Conflict with sports schedule
22. Conflict in schedule with friends
23. Lack of family time in the summer

transcript portions were reread to insure that the original intent had been correctly interpreted. If the meanings were the same, a single theme was identified. The result was a further narrowing in the number of identified themes.

Each theme was then individually analyzed within the context of the research questions and reported. The exact words of the parents were reported with the analysis. To avoid repetition, similar comments were eliminated, although alike statements were noted in the report.

As recommended by McNaughton (1994), data included both the commonalities and unique features among the families' experiences. As there was no intention to imply quantitative findings from these interviews, no attempt was made to limit reported comments to frequently stated opinions. Rather the diversity of comments including unique statements was valued.

Data and Analysis

In this section, information gathered from the interviews is discussed as it relates to the three research questions: 1. What is the overall satisfaction of parents with year-round education? 2. What impact has the year-round calendar had on family life? 3. What impact have intersessions had on families? Parents' general perceptions of the two schools studied and regarding year-round schooling are described in the sections "Parent Attitudes Toward the Schools" and "Perceived Academic Impact". The effects of the new schedule on family life are discussed in the sections "Impact of Arab Culture", "Family Summer Vacations", "Different Schedules in the Family", and "Child Care". The data related to intersession periods are discussed in the "Intersessions" section.

Parents Attitudes Toward the Schools

All of the families interviewed expressed positive attitudes toward their schools regardless of whether or not they supported year-round schooling.

> "Anyone who asks me I say it's a very beautiful school and they teach them very well and I'm very satisfied with the work they do. They come home, they're very... I mean they picked up their grades. I'm really proud of them. Everyone at the school is very friendly. You walk in and there's always someone who says hi to you. No one looks at you with a dirty look or anything. I'd just tell them I love the school. I just love it." *And about the extended school year?* "The only thing I'd say about that is that I'm not happy with that. I don't like that." (parent #11)

This finding was consistent with the strong support and approval for local schools demonstrated in surveys such as the Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1993). When

parents were asked to rate the public school attended by their oldest child, seventy-two percent gave their child's school an A or a B. However, when these parents were asked to grade public schools as a whole, only nineteen percent awarded the nation's schools an A or a B. Parents at both schools rated their school higher than other schools.

> "It's a very good school. They have so many activities. My kids are happy to be here. You know what? Every parent here wants to send his kid to School B." (parent #13)

All parents at both schools described their schools as comfortable places for parents as well as for children.

> "It's very good. I know, like my experience with School A, maybe with another school I would have, but School A is... I am very, very comfortable with it. I like the teachers. I like the principal. I like the way everything around the school. I just don't have anything against School A." (parent #3)

Both buildings were neighborhood schools where parents frequently walked or drove their children to and from school. Parents met their neighbors at the school. Being comfortable strongly contributed to parents feeling satisfied with their children's schools.

The schools had bilingual staff members and communicated with the parents in Arabic as well as English.

> "I like the school a lot. I like the teachers and even the principal. If I have a problem or the kids have a problem, I just go ahead and talk to her. They are very nice, you know. I never have any problem with them. Even the teachers, they try all the time to, if they listen to the parents. They like the parents keep check on their children all the time. They help them more. This is what they tell me, you know. Keep check on their children so if there is any problem or anything. I didn't have any problem. Like when they start they learn a different language. The first one, he had a

> little problem with the language, but they help me to put him in bilingual class and even in this language the teachers they help him a lot. Any problem with the teachers, you know. I wish these two girls, if I stay in this home, in this area, you know, will stay with this school." (parent #9)

The parents were pleased with the teachers and the administration. They felt the administration and teachers were genuinely interested in their children's welfare.

> "Oh yeah, and I love... Principal A is very, like she's, the way she's always like taking care of the school and the students, parents... She's involved in a lot of things. She's not the type of principal, like ignoring things. She's on top of everything. I like that. I seen her once going out of the school and watching kids crossing and the way the parents are dealing with it and the kids are dealing with it. And she sent notes to parents after she noticed maybe a few wrong things she mentioned it to them too. She's concerned about everything." (parent #3)

> "It's a good school. I like the school a lot. Everybody is friendly over here. And I really don't have nothing bad to say. And they keep an eye on the children, I noticed, much more than other schools, any other school. Maybe because it's small, I don't know. I'm sure that has a lot to do with it. It's a small school. A beautiful school." (parent #7)

One parent who moved out of School A's attendance area explained why she chose to keep her son at the school. Rather than choosing School A so that her child could remain on a year-round schedule, Parent 15 said she chose School A because of the teacher her child would have.

> "And he's going to be at School A mainly because I like his teacher. She's going to teach third grade and have the same students. And we were talking. And she's going to have Ahmed, so that's why we're staying." (parent #15)

Both schools were housed in new buildings. Other buildings in the district were constructed in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Parents were pleased with and proud of their new buildings.

> "Oh, I always, wherever I go and they say about schools, the first one I say, the best school is School B. I love this school. I love the teachers. All of them. All of them, they nice. They care about the children. An excellent school. The program is excellent and the school's very clean. I never seen a school that clean because I went all over. Back in Chicago, the schools are very old, you know. She went preschool and she went first grade... no, preschool and kindergarten in Chicago. And the schools are nice, I mean the buildings are so old. Too old. But this building is beautiful. I mean, I never seen like that. Even in this area I didn't see schools like that. It's an excellent school." (parent #14)

When asked to describe their schools, virtually every parent described their school as "beautiful". This pride contributed to their satisfaction with the schools.

> "I like the school very much. I like the air conditioning here in the school for the kids. I like the bathrooms. And in each room there is a boys and girls so they don't have to go outside and in the hall." (parent #7)

Interviewed parents who opposed the year-round schedule chose to keep their children at the schools in spite of the calendar.

> "I like the school, but not the schedule. It's a very nice school and I wish all the children in Michigan they have the same system, because it's really nice school. Nice system there. Even the principal is very careful with the children. She take care of the children. Like the time when they leave the school. She watch them. She makes sure that nobody hurt. You know what I mean. I don't know anything about School C (another neighborhood school--the school her children would attend if this mother elected a traditional calendar school). About the system, the studying, you know. If they have something like the summer, that would be wonderful, but I can not. I'm very sure I'm going to be in big trouble with the other kids. Because one of them going to stay home and the other one going to school. And I can't, I don't want them to change their school. Finish graduate

> from that school. I get used to School A. I understand the people. I understand the teachers. I don't be afraid of my child staying one hour after the school." (parent #9)

The vast majority of parents chose to remain at the two schools regardless of whether they supported year-round education. The parents felt comfortable with the schools and rated them very highly. Until they were specifically asked their opinion of the new schedule, parents did not express any feelings of dissatisfaction. The strong support parents felt toward their children's schools may have contributed to the high satisfaction ratings received in parent surveys that did not separate school satisfaction from satisfaction with the year-round calendar.

Perceived Academic Impact

Many parents cited the potential educational benefits of year-round schooling. They felt that more time spent in school would be better for their children. All of the children of the families interviewed received extra time in school. One child attended two intersessions adding ten days to her school year. The other children of families interviewed attended all three intersession weeks for a total of fifteen additional days of school during the year.

> "I thought it was good because, you know, you want your kids to go more to school. I had a good feeling. The kids were excited too. They are enjoying it." (parent #13)

Parent #18 agreed,

> "I feel it is better for the child. Instead of him staying home, playing around, doing nothing, that he will learn more if he is in school." (parent #18)

Parents who were new immigrants felt that education was

important for their children and wanted them to attend school as much as possible.

> "They go to school and summer school too. It's good for them to go to school. I like them to go to school a lot of the time. This is vacation. Twenty-one days." (parent #4),

an Arab mother who had children at School B explained. She believed three weeks between the conclusion of a bilingual/Chapter I summer school program and the beginning of the new school year on July 30 was a long enough vacation for her children.

Another Arab mother agreed,

> "I like it. Believe me I like it. I send my children to summer school. I like it, too. Let them learn. School is good for them. You know right now, they fool around." (parent #6)

One School B mother reported that her daughter did not share her parents' opinion of year-round education.

> "In another way I felt like with my daughter, that she didn't like summer school. That's the real truth because she thinks that she needs more summer time. I'm happy with it. I want my child to be in school because running around all the time is not, you know... She's now, she's ok. She keeps telling me, 'Why my school, why my school has to start now?' So I say, ok they give you in the winter time, they give you a lot of breaks. She says, 'No we don't need breaks in the winter. What we do in the winter time? We need it now.' But, we are happy. Me and her dad, we are happy that school started." (parent #14)

In spite of their preference for the traditional calendar, several parents believed that their children benefited academically from attending school on a year-round schedule. A single working mom explained,

> "Jim is not away from the teachers that long during the summer break, except it seems like he's home more than he's at school. Because when you have the October break, and then you get these teacher inservice days and

everything else in between, and you get the holidays, and you get him back again for his next... The only thing is year-round school, a lot of us don't like it, parents. But your kid is more in depth with everything when he goes back. It's not like he has been home and he's going back to a fresh new start." *How about achievement? Grades? Test scores?* "My son is doing wonderful." *Is there a change since it became a year-round school?* "Yes." *Do you attribute it to that or something else?* "You see my son and my daughter were in the LD, you know. And um, he doesn't need it any more. And I think that's wonderful. They have those classes there for him. You know, the ones that need more help. And his teacher and everybody was just great. So he doesn't need that anymore and he's going to go to School C and I think it's wonderful. And my daughter is still in there because she needs more help with her math. And her reading has really improved." *Do you attribute any of that to the change in the calendar?* "Yes, probably." (parent #2)

Several parents expressed their belief that year-round school lessens summer learning loss. Parent #6 was asked,

If there was a chance that the school would go back to the regular calendar in August, would you be in favor of that or would you want them to stay the way they are now? "The way they are now. And they can go on vacation. If they are going to stay outside three months, they are going to forget everything that they learned. Believe me. You leave your kids. They like to play outside. You teach them how to go to school. They like school, you know."

Parent #8 was asked,

What was your first reaction when you heard about it (extended school year)? "I was excited. I think that children, I know they miss so much. I know in the summer with my children, right around the beginning of August, they're bored and they want to go back. They say, 'I want to go to school. I want to go to school with my friends.' Well, my oldest, she loves school. So I like it. I think it's better, that they should be going year-round always. I think it's better for their education." *Has your opinion changed at all since you began?* "No. I'm still very supportive. I'm for year-round completely. You know, a two or three week break. I think six weeks is too long. It's not that I don't want my children at home. It's just that I want them to

get a better education." (parent #8)

Parents believed that on the traditional calendar, too much time was spent catching up in the fall after summer vacation.

> *And what was you initial reaction (to year-round school) at that time?* "I thought it was a good idea because I know that it takes kids longer to get back on track. I know that they say that it takes them about a month to get back with some things." (parent #12)

Several parents believed that the extended school calendar made their children's schools more competitive with schools in other countries. Parent #8 explained,

> "In the summer, when they have just the six weeks, I think that going back they don't lose as much. Because there's just a little, going back shortly and it gives them a nice vacation, but they're still fresh. I think that when they go back in September, they get bored and just forget. I think that they are still kind of motivated. As far as going back, but just I think that the longer... I think that they should go completely year-round. I believe it's good for them. That it's good for their education." *Then more than 180 days?* "I think so, yeah. I really do. I think so. They stopped... the reason why there are summers off is because of years ago with migrant workers. Isn't that what it was from?" *Agriculture?* "I think that in Japan and all over they go to school, don't they, all week and all year? I can believe that. Now in America, school isn't the most important thing, and it should be. I think that the more schooling, you know, the more time they have there, maybe it's more important to them, because they're there more. I don't know. My daughter seems to like it. You know, likes the year-round school. She'd like to go always."

A parent who moved to the United States from Europe three years prior to the interview felt that the school year should have been longer.

> *And what's your reaction to the extended year school calendar now? How do you feel about it?* "...I like the way it is. I thought maybe instead of just being extended and keeping vacations, maybe they would have took a few more days." *The potential for 15 more days*

> *is there with the intersessions. Do you mean more than that number of days?* "Yes, sometimes you read studies of schools in other countries, like Germany, that have over 200 days of school. That's what I'm for. I'm thinking maybe they could add a couple more days." (parent #17)

Parents believed their children were ready to return to school earlier than September.

> "I think it's a good idea. I think that they could start back maybe a week or two later, but... I think they learn more. They're bored in the summer. They get into more mischief." (parent #12)

One mother, a teacher at another district school, explained that she favored year-round school,

> "because when they're home for a long time they get bored. And you cannot entertain them every day. Two weeks at home is not... they're not going to lose. I hate to say this, but we don't give them the help that we should. I hate to say that, but we don't. So they need to be at school. We're not doing our job as far as education at home. So he has to be at school more. And never stay at home for a long period of time because he loses stuff he's learned." (parent #15)

Several parents who expressed opposition to year-round felt that their children had a difficult time focusing on school work during the summer months.

> "It's too hot in the summer, and the children, they like to play. You know, they come home and they like to play, they don't like to do homework. It doesn't feel like school. Yeah, because he used to come home and play, and he say, I did my homework at school, I don't have nothing." (parent #10)

Only one parent reported changing her opinion of year-round education after several months of experience with the new calendar. This Arab mother felt that her situation was further complicated because her children attended religious school as well as School A.

> "They have, you know for a whole month, they have summer school for the children they need or the parents they like to, you know because the MEAP (state achievement test) test, it's going to help them. I had one of my children. It's hard for the children, for them to concentrate about studying. You take their time. And if I sent him to school and Arabic school and summer school, he's not going to like it for sure. I had trouble last year with one of them. One of them, his teacher was kind of, give him the homework during the class. Well she give him a test. You know all the time she's telling him you have a test. You have during the class. Checks how much he understands, how much he knows. So some of the children, it's enough you know to tell them you have a test or something like this. They study for the test. The one day he study it's ok, you know. He has a test, you know. He has no problem with that. The other one, he sees his brother. He don't have to study for a test. I have trouble with him, you see. And when the year's too long, it's too much. In the beginning I agree. I say let's try and see how it's going to work. Give them a break." (parent #9)

One parent believed that intersession breaks and other times students were not in school during the year diminished the value of the year-round calendar.

> *Do you think anything was gained by your kids being on this calendar?* "No. Because they had lot of weeks off later on in the year." *Do you mean the intersessions?* "Yeah, they had extra. Plus yeah, the weeks they went. Ten o'clock they started. Ten o'clock, and they come back early. It's like playing. It's like nothing. They didn't learn nothing." *Has the change in the calendar, do you think it has affected your kids? Do you think that, for example, Ali or your second grader, are more interested in school or less interested in school because of the change in calendar, or do you think it's about the same?* "It's too easy, you know, it's just like playing. I mean, the whole year was like playing, you know. It's not like learning. It's not like school should be." (parent #10)

Impact of Arab Culture

Fourteen of the parents interviewed were Muslim immigrants. All but one of these parents were born in Lebanon. As one mother

explained, the school calendar in Lebanon allows students a long summer vacation.

> "I was a little shocked, you know. I never heard such that school started this early. About when school started this year. You know, I'm Lebanese. I grew up in my country. We get the full three months of summer. Like from the end of June, we get July, August, September. We go back like the first of October. So we have the full summer, three months. I was a little surprised, let me tell you. I was a little surprised, but it doesn't bother me. It bothers the children, most of them. They say they don't like it." (parent #14)

The year-round calendar potentially conflicts with Arab family life in two ways. First, many Muslim parents send their children to Arabic school after school, on weekends, or in the summer. Second, families plan to return to the Middle East during the summer to visit relatives. These trips are expensive and therefore do not occur in most families on a yearly basis, but many parents mentioned the difficulty that a shortened summer vacation would create if they were planning a trip overseas.

> "Most of the children, they say half the school is Arab and Muslim and our children go back home to visit our families. At least they know their Grandma and Grandpa, their families. Or to send them to Arabic school to learn their language. If you have six weeks, six weeks is too short. You can not send them to two schools. What we are doing now is send them during the school. You know they leave school go to another school." *After school Arabic school?* "Either after school or on the weekends and that's you know, they start to... I'm from Iraq. To go overseas let's say. That's one of the problems. Or to send them to another school. I was planning to send them you know, if I didn't go visit my parents, to another school in the summer. They have another program. I like it. They have summer school. You can not send a child for a whole year to school. You see, now six weeks and the summer school starts after two weeks. And ends before the beginning of the year, you know ." (parent #9)

In schools following the traditional calendar, some families

take their children out of school in late May or early June to travel to Lebanon. Other families may return from overseas one or more weeks after the beginning of the school year. Parent #10 explained,

> "Okay, now if you want to go to Lebanon, it's not just one month. It's not worth it to go for one month. So we like to go for two months, but we have to come back before, you know, the school starts." *Are you going this summer or are you staying here?* "No, this summer we're staying." *If you were going to Lebanon, would you consider taking your children out of school for a month, or wouldn't you do that?* "No, I wouldn't do that. I don't like to do that." (parent #10)

Some parents cited the volatile situation between Israel and Lebanon as their reason for remaining in the United States during the first summer of year-round school. However, they expressed concern that the new schedule would interfere with future trips. One mother, an employee of the school district who worked at a traditional calendar school, stated she did not travel overseas over the summer,

> "but definitely next summer, I'm going and I know that she will be missing 20 or more days of school. What am I going to do? I have been here for 25 years and I never went back. So do you blame me if... And I already know that she will be missing and I say it's ok." *When do you plan on leaving? Do you plan on leaving...* "Of course, when school is finished, you know." *You have to because you're working in the district. Some people left in May because it was cheaper to get plane tickets then.* "No, I have to wait for my kids to finish. It's not because of my job. It's because I have to wait for my kids too. I was planning on going with Inaya and Gada (two of her daughters). My husband said stay here because of what happened, but definitely, next year I am going. And I know she will be missing 20 days and that's ok. I deserve a break." *Has it interfered with any activities such as camp, or family vacations up to this point or really it hasn't done...* "Really, I don't go out that much. I don't leave the house that much. I don't have that many vacations. But, from what I heard from other

> parents, yes. A lot of parents were going to transfer their kids from one school to another because of missing all of those days." *There has been a lot of talk...* "I know one parent who did. Because she just left two weeks ago to Lebanon. I said to her, 'Why are you leaving when school is starting in two weeks?' She said, 'Well, I transferred her. I don't want her to go back.' I don't want to be waiting. I can't miss my opportunity to go." (parent #13)

Three of the families who were interviewed did take summer vacations in Lebanon. Initially, parent #3 thought that year-round school would impact her family travel.

> "At that time I thought that maybe because, you know we are originally from overseas, from Lebanon, at first I thought maybe, you know, it's not convenient for us. You know, like if you want to take a long vacation. If you go there you are going to spend two days, like in the airplane. You don't want to spend two or three weeks there and come back, like, uh, very fast. You want to spend time there because it is costly to go there and you need a week to recover from the, you know, plane ride. And then on the way coming back you need another week to recover again. I thought, you know, that it's not enough time for us to take a vacation, but when I tried it. It was ok. A little bit, you know, what is not very convenient for me is taking too many vacations during the school year and you know, sometimes I say, what am I going to do during her time off from school." (parent #3)

Family #18 found they could plan their trip around the school schedule.

> "We worked it around the calendar. We went to Lebanon after school closed and came back before the school opened. I've only been here since Friday." (parent #18)

Parent #14 was asked if year-round school, interfered with any trips?

> *I know you said that you are from Lebanon. If you were to go back to visit over the summer time, would this cause a problem for you?* "It didn't really, but... I was planning to go to Lebanon this summer and stay a little more, but my husband said 'No, that's ok.'"

The three families who did travel during the summer found that it was feasible to return to the Middle East without their children missing school. None of the families who cited the difficulty of traveling overseas as an argument against year-round schools actually planned or made a trip during the first summer. Although it would be necessary to alter the timing of a vacation, parent #15 explained that a trip to the Middle East was possible.

> "The only thing is we do travel a lot. This year I'm not going away, so I'll be ok. Next year we're traveling and even if we travel, it won't be more than a month So if he gets a month, from June 16 to July 16, that will still be enough." *He'll have six weeks. I'm sure.* "Six weeks off?" *Six weeks off is what it is now. Instead of ten.* "Oh yeah. yeah. yeah, that's enough. Even six weeks is enough for people to take and try to go somewhere." *Some people say that. Other people say that by the time they travel, with the seven or eight hours difference and travel time, that it takes a week to settle in. And once they get back, the same thing is true.* "Then that's two weeks and a month there. That's plenty for me. For me that's plenty. I can't afford to travel more than that anyway." (parent #15)

Family Summer Vacations

Year-round school changes the traditional rhythm of family life. Summer vacation time is shortened, while potential vacation time is created by the intersession breaks. Families coped with the change in different ways. Parent #1 was able to take her daughter to Australia during the expended winter vacation. Parent #9 was forced to change plans.

> "Usually we go to (family) camp August 5, but we just switched it. It was no big deal." (parent #9)

One single mother felt that the calendar change interfered with her family's summer plans.

Has the extended year calendar impacted any plans that

> you would have had during the summer? For example, you said that you really didn't have the chance to go anywhere. Would you have gone somewhere if you were following the traditional calendar schedule? 'Yes.' Visit relatives? 'Yes.' Do you have family that is out of the state? 'Well, out of the state and further out on the east side, like out in (a suburb about ten miles away). Out there you know. They always want me to come over and like they talk about it and now, you know, I can't. The girls are going to start school and it's impossible.'
> (parent #11)

Social Impact

Year-round schooling influences children's social as well as academic lives. Students with friends or siblings in schools following the traditional calendar miss shared vacation time that once was spent playing together. However, none of the parents interviewed cited this problem. School was seen as an important part of students' social lives.

When asked what she would tell a new neighbor about year-round school, parent #15 responded,

> "I would tell them that it is good for the kids. It keeps them busy with their friends. If they lose contact for three months, they'll lose their relations with their friends also. Not only with education and learning, but... Let's say with my boy, if he had friends, right and they're all at school. He only sees them in school. If he's home, he doesn't get to see them. So he has to go to school to see his friends. And if he doesn't go for three months, then he loses his friends. You know friendships and the social side. School is like a social thing to the kids too. I like the year-round school. I like to keep them in the same ambiance." (parent #15)

Parents felt their children preferred school because their friends were at school.

> "They liked it better than being home. I don't take them on vacation. That's why they like school. They get to see their friends. They learn better and all

that." (parent #6)

Parent #20 explained that her children really didn't notice the calendar change.

> "They are too young to notice. They want to go and be with their friends. They're happy. I don't think it matters then it changed." (parent #20)

> "Yeah, she get nervous. A little bit nervous. She says 'Why I have to go to school? It's summer time. It's not supposed to be open, the school.' I felt like, I got sorry, you know. She's ok now. She's happy. She saw her friends. She's happy and I see her happy. She doesn't say anything now." (parent #16)

Students who were new to the area met neighborhood children sooner because of year-round school.

> *Did you find out when you came to register for school that there was a different calendar or from neighbors?* "From neighbors. I found out from neighbors... We moved here the *first of July*... Couldn't believe it, you know, because it wasn't something I was used to." *So when you first heard it, besides being shocked and having to get things going really quickly, were you happy or displeased? What was your first reaction?* "I was happy." *And why was that?* "Because when we first moved here, there wasn't too much for the kids to do, they didn't have many friends here then. The sooner they go to school, the more kids you get to know, to learn..." (parent #17)

Many parents cited year-round education's positive impact on their children's social relationships. Parent # 3 explained,

> "Well, she loves school and she hates it when she is off school. She likes to be at school, especially because she is the only child and she's like... and she doesn't have too many friends around, you know, around here. And she feels more comfortable at school where she knows a lot of people there, a lot of kids, especially she loves her teacher, Mrs. Smith. You know, spending more time. Even the intersessions, she was going." (parent #3)

Intersessions

Intersessions offered students one week of optional enrichment, utilizing thematic units three times during the year. The first intersession break occurred in October when students could attend a one week intersession program followed by an additional week of vacation. The second and third intersessions coincided with traditional calendar breaks at Christmas and Easter. At these times, year-round school children had an intersession program week followed by a vacation break of two weeks. All but one of the parents interviewed felt the intersession programs were excellent learning experiences for their children.

> "It's nice with three weeks off. The first week's nice cause he's not home with you. Either you can keep him home or you can send him to school. During the intersession, they call it play school. There he stays, but they don't do homework. They don't have any classroom assignments. It's all playing, but learning. So really likes that first week. Which is nice too cause then you only got two weeks. So's got a week break where he's still learning. The intersession's not bad. They say they do that is pretty good. (parent #1)

Intersession breaks were designed to allow shorter, more frequent vacations and therefore more continuous instruction. Parent #7 was asked,

> When they came back to school after being off for two weeks, how was that? What was their reaction? Were they happy or unhappy to go back to school? Do you think they were less or more ready to learn than if they didn't have the intersession? "No, they were more ready. It's good for them, in a way. I love this program a lot, but if I'm going to be working even I don't know how it's going to affect me. That's the only thing." (parent #7)

Teachers were given the option of working during the intersession program. Substitutes replaced regular teachers when

the teachers chose not to work. The substitutes were paid to plan intersession activities with regular teachers who worked with them during the intersession weeks. This plan worked well from the perspective of the interviewed parents.

> "She had a great time in the intersessions. Like different than the usual when they do. I'm telling you, she loves her teacher and the intersession did not affect her that much, you know, seeing another teacher." *Did she have a different teacher from the building or did she have someone who normally wasn't there?* "I don't think she was normally there, no. They used substitutes or something. And she was like, because they had fun things to do, no, she didn't mind it, no." (parent #3)

For the students, the intersessions seem not having homework.

> "Yes, they were. They loved the intersessions. But I was talking to my son earlier and when he said he liked about it was no homework, intersessions they liked it. It was fun for them. Going to school, knowing they're not going to have any homework. (parent #7)

Several parents felt that the intersessions could be improved if students were given homework making the intersessions more like "real" school.

> *Do you plan on sending her this year to the intersessions?* "Sure, sure. I want her to be happy, to enjoy her life, you know. But I'd rather they give her like homework. I don't mind, you know. I like it." (parent #14)

The change in instructional methods as well as the field trips were positive intersession features.

> "Very exciting to kids. Every time they have intersession, they go on a field trip and they do something different than I think in the curriculum or something." (parent #3)

Parents reported that their children enjoyed doing something different at school.

Did she tell you anything about the intersession program? "I think they just wanted to do some new things. I thought it was a good idea. Because the kids absorb so much. She enjoyed it a lot because they did all those different things that they don't do in regular classrooms. Like last year they brought in a chef and they learned how to make pasta. And she was real excited about that." (parent #12)

"I think it's great. I think it's better that they do different curriculum during the intersessions too, that they learn about different things that maybe normally they wouldn't be teaching them. You know, just things that catch their interest." (parent #8)

Parents who disapproved of other aspects of year-round school were enthusiastic about the intersession programs.

"The kids loved it, the intersession because they studied about other things, other things, I don't remember... They studied about Africa. And they did so many activities. They feel like they're free. They don't have any responsibilities. They don't do homework. They can do whatever they want. They loved it. Really they did." *And what did you think about it? About the intersessions. Did you think it was a good idea?* "Yeah, it was because they were learning at the same time. Learning about other cultures and other things. It is good. It's only because of the time. Like I told you, only the summer time. The intersession weeks were great. They loved it. They were excited looking for so many new things." (parent #13)

Parent #9, who said that she wished School A would return to the traditional calendar, believed the intersession programs were a good idea. She said her children enjoyed the intersession weeks.

"They like it. I think there is not too much homework. Any child, even the adults, they go to high school or something, as long as there is not too much homework, they like it." *Did they tell you about the trips they took?* "They like it. If you want the truth, you know. It's something, they have fun, if you want the truth." *Did you see learning going on during that time? Besides the fun?* "Yes, yes it works. It's very, I think it's a good idea." (parent #9)

The intersession program was optional and there was no penalty for missed days of school.

> *Did your children go to all of the intersessions?* "Sometimes they missed days. Like if I planned... It's not really mandatory so I... Yeah, they go to all of them, but they miss some of them (days). They like them and I like that." (parent #8)

For parents who favored extending the school each year, the intersession programs added fifteen days of instruction.

> *Did your children attend the intersessions in October, December, and April?* "Yes, they go to all of them. I like them to go to school. It's good for them." (parent #4)

All of the families interviewed sent their children to the intersession programs and plan to send them again next year.

> *Will they go to intersessions again next year?* "Yes. You know they are not just staying there. They are going somewhere. They are taking them to the zoo. . ." (parent #6)

> *And will your son participate in future intersessions?* "yeah, yeah. It's more entertaining. Less monotonous. And it's good for the kids. The change." (parent #15)

For parents who worked, the intersession program also meant they did not need to find child care during that week.

> "It's like having your kid at day care, but run by professionals. You know, I prefer her to be in the intersessions rather than like being at a babysitter actually. No it's more, you know, she benefits more from it." (parent #20)

The need for child care was perhaps the reason parents who did not favor thematic instruction still sent their children to the intersession programs.

> *Did your children attend all three intersessions?* "They did go to school at that time because, you know, I had to work. If my mom's not here or my sister, they go because I'm not going to have them stay home all day by themselves." (parent #2)

Parent #10 was the only parent interviewed who expressed strong dissatisfaction with the intersessions.

> *Did your children attend the intersessions?* "I thought it's better than keeping them home. You know, they tell you you can keep them home. So I said, whatever they learn, it's better than staying home." *Did your children enjoy themselves?* "Yeah, I think they enjoyed themselves." *And how did you feel about school during that time? Did you think they were learning something during that time?* "No. Not much, you know. I thought they weren't learning much. Plus, the kids, they can stay home during the intersessions. So it's nothing." (parent #10)

The optional weeks gave parents the opportunity to take family vacations throughout the year.

> "Christmas I had, I went to Australia. I didn't have any problem with the teacher giving her permission to leave. I had the time and you know, using the intersession was like the vacation." (parent #3)

Different Schedules in the Family

An acknowledged problem with year-round schools occurs when a family has children on different schedules. Conflicting schedules were viewed as a problem by only three of the eight families who had children attending more than one school.

> "When they're all at school, it's easier for you at home. And you know when they're all at home it's easier. It's not good to have somebody at school and somebody stay home." (parent #10)

Both single mothers (parent #2 and parent #11) interviewed were opposed to year-round education. Parent #2 explained that she had sent her children to spend the summer with their grandparents. The month between the start of the school year for her daughter and the beginning of school for her son posed a serious problem.

> "So my son doesn't start school until the end of August. Ok. My daughter starts back July thirtieth. So that means I'm going to have to go down there next month and get my daughter and bring her back her while my son stays. She doesn't understand that. Um, ok. Then when my daughter comes back, I'm going to have to find somebody to watch her until I get home. You know. So that makes it inconvenient for me. See, my son, when they got out of school at 3:30, he's twelve and um, he can watch my daughter, you know and he's fine. But it's kind of hard when he's down there and she's here. And I can't leave her alone." (parent #2)

Several of the twelve families with children at only one school, however did anticipate that having children on different schedules would cause a problem in the future.

> "Last August I didn't work and he wasn't in school. He was just starting preschool. I'll have my opinion come next year. That's when I'm wondering. Because when he switches schools, I'm going to have two kids on two different days." *Do you mean two different schedules because your oldest will be in middle school?* "You got it. So that's when I'll have my downfall. I wonder whether it'll be good when schools are running so different, because then you're talking vacation times. Then when one goes to school, one doesn't go to school... I can see these parents that are complaining about it. It would be a burden that way." (parent #1)

One parent identified positive aspects to having children on different calendars.

> "I kind of like it now that the little ones are in school and I can go with my bigger ones. You know, how it is fun. I can take them to the museum without have to take all of them. And otherwise, I cannot enjoy that." (parent #17)

Parent #13, a staff member in another district building, described how the scheduling conflict impacted her family during the intersessions.

> "Everybody is busy. Everybody is working. Everybody is in school except them and that's not good, especially for working parents. What are you going to do with your kids? Go find a babysitter for them. Luckily I used to

> take my kids with me because the principal allowed us that. But still you know, I don't think that it's that good because of missing all of those days. And if I have five kids, I don't want one to start one month before and one one month after. Gada, really, she didn't want to come. But I'm glad yesterday when she came she changed her mind. She said 'Oh, I love it. The teacher is so nice. I like to work.' But really she didn't want to come. She said, 'How come Inaya didn't go yet? How come everybody is at home except me?'" *Was that a problem for you?* "Yes, it was. 'Mom, why are you at home and we're not?' It was a problem. Yeah, they didn't like it. They didn't like it at all." (parent #13)

Several parents expressed a desire to have middle school and high school on a year-round calendar so that they could have all of their children on the same schedule.

> *How about the difference between your School D student who is at home right now, not going to school yet and your other two children who are going here now? Is that a problem? The different dates that they go to school?* "I wish that the middle school would start the same way as School B." (parent #18)

Most parents with scheduling difficulties were able to adapt without serious problems.

> *I know you have children in different places and you're on a different calendar. Has that been a problem for your family?* "We have to adapt. I have to plan someone to stay home when he's home. His dad has to either find someone to watch him or take him to work." *Has that been a problem or something that you just dealt with?* "We dealt with it. I think it's worth it." (parent #15)

Child Care

Problems finding child care, particularly during the intersessions, is a common complaint with year-round schedules. Both of parent #2's children attended School A during the 1995-96 school year. Although the intersessions complicated her situation, parent #2 had child care problems throughout the entire

year.

> "Well, for the reason with them going all year-round, it's hard for me during the summer because I have to work and I think they should take into consideration these single parents who don't have nobody to watch them. I did put my daughter in after school care, you know, and my son, but that was really expensive. Ok? For me. Then they closed at six o'clock. I don't get off work until seven. So then I don't get home until seven-thirty. So that didn't work. My sister helps me, you know, like a few days during the week pick them up or whatever, but that's not every day. Last year my mom came up here for November to help me out with them, which was good, you know. And I knew that somebody was going to be home with them. But now, she went back home and my kids are down there, you know, for the summer." *After the first intersession in October? How did you manage child care then? Do you remember? Did you send them the first week to the intersession program?* "Yeah, they still went." *So they went for one week and then they were off for one week. Do you remember what you did in October?* "I had a... I don't know if I took off some days... or my sister..." *How about April? It was around Easter. And there was Christmas?* "My ma was here. Christmas time is probably the easiest time because, you know, there's not a real big difference and you can send them that one week." (parent #2)

Another working mother found the year-round schedule to be easier for her.

> "I work. And this is, year-round school was convenient for me cause I work and I don't have to put her, like for a long time, with a babysitter. That's a positive thing about it. So she won't be out for a long time. And I'm noticing with the babysitter and her kids and stuff. You know, maybe she's my best friend, but at the same time, I don't like her kids, the way they talk to each other or to their friends. But they don't talk like this with my daughter because she's not like this. Well, it worked out ok like any kind of babysitter. That's ok. Because she's alone anyway. So she goes over... My friend had like a four or five year old and he goes half a day, so she, you know... I managed. It was ok. (parent #3)

Having a high school babysitter who was on a different schedule complicated child care for one parent.

> "I can't see why (the school district) doesn't have everybody year-round or not. Because also my sitter is in High School C, isn't he? Yeah, and I need him to be on my schedule too." (parent #1)

Of the fourteen Middle Eastern women interviewed, four worked outside their homes. The other ten were at home taking care of their families. Parent #9 felt that the year-round calendar would be better suited to working mothers' schedules.

> "Some people they probably agree with that (year-round school) because the mother, she's working all the day. She needs all the time for her children to work. So she can go to her work all the time and not to worry about the babysitter, but not all the people. In our community, because most of the women, they don't work. Like say half of them. Because they have a lot of responsibility and if you put a babysitter, you gonna spend more than you work. You see when you have a lot of children. Or she don't trust the babysitter. It's not easy to trust a babysitter. And the best way to raise the children. You know, you are there. This is the safe way and you know that's my opinion about this. The whole year, you know." (parent #9)

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary and Conclusions

Parents who had one year of experience were interviewed regarding their satisfaction with year-round education. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of year-round schooling on families. The study sought to answer three research questions:

1. What is the overall satisfaction of parents with year-round education?

2. What impact has the year-round calendar had on family life?

3. What impact have intersession periods had on families?

These questions were answered through interviews with twenty parents whose children attended two elementary schools during the initial year of a year-round pilot program. Because of the small number of parents interviewed and the unique nature of this population, extremely limited generalization is warranted.

During the 1995-96 school year, two elementary schools in a large suburban school district located adjacent to a Midwestern city began a pilot program changing their schedule to a single track year-round calendar. Summer vacation was shortened to six weeks and three short intersession breaks with optional one week thematic instruction programs were offered. These schools were chosen because of teacher, administrator, and parent interest as well as availability of air conditioning. The goal of the program was to improve instruction by making learning more continuous and to add an optional fifteen days to the school year.

Both schools had heavy concentrations of poor students. Sixty-one percent of students at School A and seventy-nine percent of students at School B received free or reduced lunch. A majority of the students were Middle Eastern; sixty-seven percent of students at School A and ninety-two percent of students at School B were of Middle Eastern heritage. Many of these students had limited English proficiency. Fifty percent of School A's students and eighty percent of School B's students had limited English proficiency.

Ten parents who had children in each of two schools were randomly selected from classroom student lists. In focused open-ended interviews, these parents shared their feelings about their children's schools and the year-round calendar. Once all interviews were completed and transcribed, the transcripts were analyzed and categorized according to common themes. Each theme was then analyzed within the context of the research questions and recorded. The family stories were told using the exact words of the parents as well as description and analysis.

All of the families interviewed expressed positive attitudes toward their schools. This was consistent with the strong support and approval generally expressed by parents for their children's schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1993). Parents described both schools as comfortable places for parents and children. The large number of bilingual staff members who could communicate with parents in Arabic as well as English helped foster parents' positive feelings. Parents felt that the teachers and administration were genuinely concerned with their children's welfare. Some of the satisfaction parents felt with the schools

was related to their new buildings and state-of-the-art facilities unique to these two schools within the district. When asked to do so, parents were able to differentiate between their overall satisfaction with their children's schools and their approval of the year-round schedule. All of the parents interviewed, even those who opposed year-round education, chose to have their children remain at the schools and described their opinion of the schools as positive.

Even parents who preferred the traditional calendar identified educational benefits to the year-round schedule. More time in school was thought to be better for children. Many parents believed that extending the school year would make their schools more like schools in other countries. Parents felt that their children suffered summer learning loss when they spent long summer vacations away from school because the traditional calendar forced teachers to catch students up before new instruction could begin in the fall. Several parents who expressed opposition to year-round education felt that it was unnatural and difficult for their children to study during the summer when parents believed their children should be playing. One parent stated that she did not see the value of the extra intersession days. She felt because the intersessions were optional, their value was diminished. None of the parents believed that year-round education lessened the academic achievement of their children.

Thirteen of the parents interviewed were Lebanese Muslim immigrants. The Lebanese school calendar which these parents followed as children offered them a three month summer vacation, so the year-round schedule was a dramatic change for them. The

year-round calendar posed two unique potential problems for these families. Families sent their children to Arabic school after public school, on weekends, or in the summer. The year-round calendar eliminated the option of sending children to religious school in the summer. The new schedule was also believed by many of the parents to make scheduling a trip back to Lebanon in the summer difficult or impossible. However, three of the twenty families interviewed did return to Lebanon over the summer. Although year-round school did force them to adjust the dates of their trips, these parents felt that they did not experience any undue difficulties because of the calendar change. These effects of year-round education were specific to the Arab population and represented a special situation unexplored in other studies.

Year-round schooling changed the traditional rhythm of family life. Summer vacation was shortened, which some families interpreted as an infringement on family time. Most families were able to reschedule their family summer vacations to correspond with their children's school calendar. In addition, one family benefited by being able to take their daughter to Australia during an intersession break without having her miss school.

Year-round schooling influenced children's social as well as academic lives. Most parents felt that there were positive social consequences to the new schedule. Children were better able to maintain friendships that might have been jeopardized over a long summer vacation. Also, students who had recently moved to the neighborhood were able to make friends sooner. Overall, parents felt that their children were happier at school because their friends were there with them rather than having their youngsters

sitting at home alone.

Most parents felt that intersessions were an excellent idea. The shorter, more frequent breaks provided more continuous instruction. The children enjoyed the diversion of thematic instruction without homework. Although several parents felt that homework should be added and the intersessions seemed to more closely resemble "real school", many parents who opposed other aspects of year-round school enthusiastically supported the intersession program. Some said that they sent their children to school so that they did not need to find child care for the week. All parents reported that their children attended and enjoyed the intersessions.

An acknowledged problem with year-round schools occurs when members of the same family have different schedules. This conflict in schedules occurs when parents work in schools following the traditional calendar and in families that have children attending more than a single school. Parents who did not yet have children in more than one building still anticipated that there might be a problem when their oldest entered middle school. One parent felt that having children on different schedules benefited her family by allowing her to spend time alone with her older children. Most parents reported that they were able to adapt without serious problems.

Problems finding child care, particularly during the intersessions, is a common complaint with year-round schools. Of the twenty parents who were interviewed, eight mothers worked outside their homes. Some working mothers felt that the year-round schedule had made finding child care more difficult for

[illegible] Other workers believed that the new calendar was more suited to their needs. The two single workers who were interviewed reported that child care problems that had existed under the traditional calendar were further complicated by the year-round schedule.

These interviews were conducted following the first year the year-round schedule was instituted. Parents saw this change as different from the "normal" calendar. Parents were not yet able to see school as a year-round activity. The rhythm of the traditional school calendar had not yet changed for them. Two changes are necessary for year-round school to become a natural part of the community. First, the schools need to continue to educate parents and convince them of the value of year-round education. Second, time is necessary. It will take several years before the community accepts the calendar as natural and views school as a year-round activity.

Recommendations

Given the nature and scope of this study, further research is suggested as follows:

1. Interviews were conducted during the summer following the first year of the year-round schools program. Future research should include interviews conducted at numerous times throughout the year and longitudinal interviews conducted following each year of experience with the alternative calendar. Differences in parent satisfaction over time could then be examined.

2. A small number of parents self-selected to send their children to traditional calendar schools prior to implementation

of the year-round calendar through a diversity school choice program. However, this open enrollment had to leave their home schools. Some schools offer a dual track system where the school operates with two groups of students, some following a year-round schedule and some following the traditional calendar. Satisfaction could be compared for both groups of parents within the same school.

3. Two other groups' satisfaction contribute to the success or failure of educational programs: students and teachers. Further study including interviews of students and teachers regarding the impact that year-round education has had in their lives should be done.

4. The two schools had large numbers of children who were bilingual and these parents were in lower economic conditions than schools in the United States. Children in both schools were first priority low income based on assessment by participation in the school lunch program. The impact year-round education had on their lives may not generalize to other populations. Future studies should include populations of students from more affluent families and students who are fluent in English.

5. Parents felt that their children benefited academically from attending school in a year-round schedule. A longitudinal achievement study could confirm or disprove this perception. Further research should be done in single track schools where the year-round calendar was adopted in an attempt to improve achievement.

This study found a great deal of parental satisfaction with two neighborhood year-round schools. All of the parents

interviewed, even those opposed to year-round education, were pleased with their children's schools. Many parents felt that their children were receiving an academically superior education because of the change that had been made to the schools' calendars. The schedule change came with a price for some parents disrupting the rhythm of family life by shortening summer vacations and introducing shorter more frequent intersessions. But, as parent #15 said, "I think it's worth it." Research is needed to examine student achievement to determine if these parents were correct.

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